

Hauser Mountain

CA-060-027C

HAUSER MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-060-027C)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 5,540 acres

The Hauser Mountain WSA is located in San Diego County, approximately 25 miles east of Chula Vista, California. The WSA is composed entirely of 5,540 public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is surrounded by private lands, and therefore, possesses a highly irregular boundary. The northern and eastern boundaries are determined entirely by private land boundaries. The southern boundary also follows the edge of private land except for a small segment that is delineated by Highway 94. The western boundary, like the southern boundary, is determined by private land, except in the northwest corner of the WSA. Roughly one mile of the WSA boundary follows a dirt road.

The unit is basically a single, broad, undulating ridge oriented north-south in an area of alternating low ridges and valleys. The area ranges in elevation from 2,400 feet in the southeast to 3,800 feet at the USGS Campo VABM horizontal control station. Numerous rocky outcrops occur throughout the unit, but nowhere in the unit is there exceptional relief.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared for the Western Counties Wilderness Study Project: no wilderness and all wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 0 acres recommended for wilderness
5,540 acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

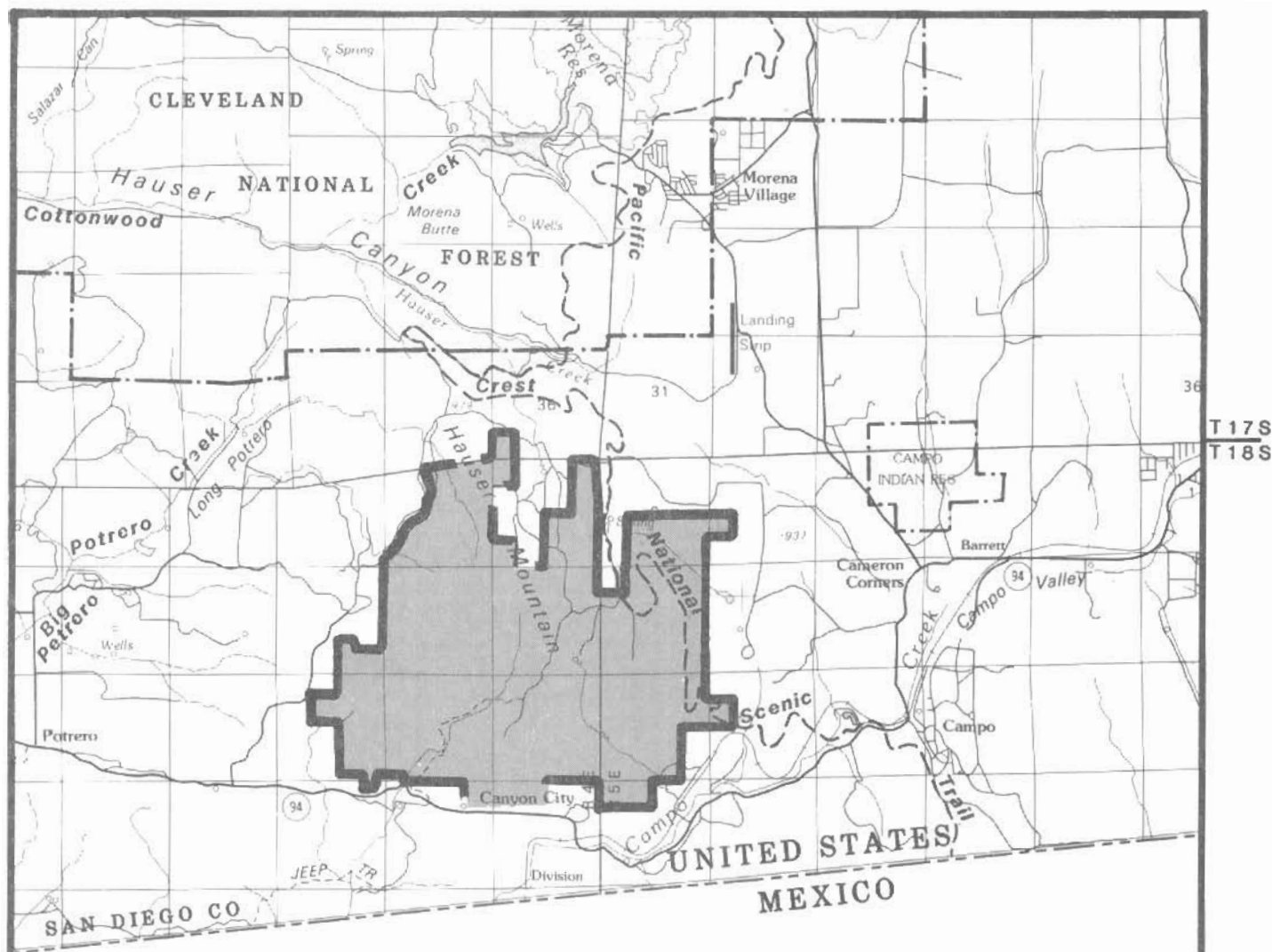
The all wilderness recommendation is environmentally preferable as it would result in the least change from the existing natural environment over the long term.

The following rationale is given in support of the nonsuitable recommendation: (1) the wilderness values for most of the area are low; (2) the current use levels have had no detrimental effect on the wilderness values the area possess; (3) need to provide for OHV routes of travel; (4) current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources and values.

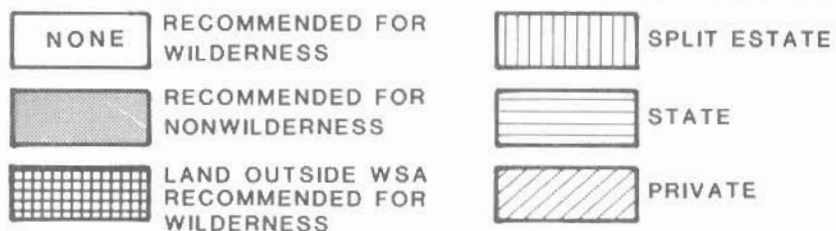
The wilderness values of this WSA, while sufficient to meet the Section 2 (c) criteria of the 1964 Wilderness Act, are less than outstanding. Within this WSA, naturalness has been reduced by a variety of range improvements supporting two grazing allotments that cover this WSA. These improvements range from numerous fences, diversion dikes, and reservoirs to primitive routes of travel used to maintain the other facilities. Although opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation are available within this WSA, they are not fully realized because of the restricted public access.

Current uses of the area have had little effect on the area's marginal wilderness values. Currently, this WSA produces roughly 166 animal unit months (AUM) of forage allocated to livestock. Both allotments are seasonal, supporting cattle for only a short time while the forage is available. The effect of the cattle on wilderness values is minimal. Current recreation use consists of backpacking, hiking, equestrian use, and hunting for upland game. Recreational use is low because of the lack of public access.

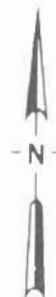
OHV use, which is often a concern on public land, is severely limited here. The absence of public access to the area and the shortage of motorized recreation opportunities available have discouraged OHV users. Use levels here are not expected to increase.



R4E | R5E



**Hauser Mountain
Proposal
MAP-1**



060-027C
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	5,540
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		<u>5,540</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	5,540
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>5,540</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: This WSA has been dominated primarily by natural forces and exhibits an undeveloped, primitive character. Access into the site has been limited by the surrounding private land. Potential users are discouraged by fences, locked gates, and the requirement to obtain permission from property owners. Man-made intrusions within the site are generally restricted to facilities, fences, and routes of travel needed to support the grazing

allotments, and a segment of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. These improvements are inconspicuous and do not significantly impact the naturalness of the study area.

2. Solitude: Rugged topography and dense vegetation provide opportunities for solitude throughout the unit. Use levels are low, and opportunities for solitude are available because of the area's remoteness, lack of usable vehicle routes, and unobtrusive adjacent land uses such as ranching, beekeeping, and rural residences. Rolling terrain, shallow canyons, huge rock outcrops in addition to tall, dense vegetation combined to provide the screening needed to enhance the sense of isolation.

This WSA may be overflowed in the future by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission during approved military operations. The visual intrusions and associated noise create temporary effects on solitude which are deemed acceptable and necessary as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Opportunities for primitive recreation are provided within the study area borders. This WSA currently supports light hunting, hiking, backpacking, and equestrian use. The southern end of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail passes through the area before meeting the United States-Mexico International Border. Opportunities for unconfined types of recreation are limited only by local areas of dense vegetation and some fences supporting the grazing allotment.
4. Special Features: Six plants identified as "rare" by the California Native Plant Society are known to occur within the vicinity of the area, and provide opportunities for nature study and photography. These species are Hemizonia floribunda, Ribes canthariforme, Solanum tenuilobatum, Pyrrocoma uniflora var. gossypina, Chamaebatia australis, Cupressus guadalupensis var. forbessii. Of these species, only one, Hemizonia floribunda, was found on or near Hauser Mountain. This species is found on dry slopes and valleys, roadsides, and sandy washes in coastal sage scrub, chaparral and grassland.

A portion of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail passes through the WSA from Canada to Mexico. Open to non-motorized use only, this Congressionally designated trail follows the crests of the west coast mountains from Canada to Mexico, a distance of nearly 2,500 miles.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 5,540 acres of the California Chaparral/Chaparral ecosystem. The Hauser Mountain WSA would not increase the diversity of ecosystems represented in the NWPS. The landforms present here generally reflect those of the neighboring hillsides and are contained within the Natural Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) in the southern California National Forests.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

<u>Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV</u>	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
California Chaparral/Chaparral	17	462,256	10	81,670
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
California Chaparral/Chaparral	17	462,256	10	81,670

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a days driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five hour drive of five major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas:
The WSA is within 50 air miles of five BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Hauser Wilderness Area, roughly one mile north of the WSA. Also within a 50 mile radius are the following designated wilderness areas: Pine Creek Wilderness Area, administered by Cleveland National Forest; and Cuyamaca Mountains and Anza Borrego Desert State Wilderness Areas.

C. Manageability

The Hauser Mountain WSA is manageable as wilderness. The fact that public access is restricted because of the surrounding private land enhances manageability of the area as wilderness by virtually eliminating the possibility of intrusions by vehicles.

There is one factor that would complicate manageability of the WSA. This area is situated like an island, surrounded by private lands which are experiencing increasing amounts of development pressure. As the encircling area grows, the WSA will become more and more like a large municipal park, and less like a wilderness area. The sights and sounds of the surrounding residences will impact opportunities for solitude and lessen the quality of primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The loss of wilderness values, caused by this effect, will occur despite the Bureau's management efforts.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Hauser Mountain WSA was not included in the BLM Geology-Energy-Mineral Assessment process completed in 1980. However, mineral resource data for the area was analyzed in the 1987 Final EIS for the Western County Wilderness Study Project. Mineral data in the EIS indicated that the WSA had low potential for the occurrence of potash feldspar.

The EIS stated that the WSA was found to have similar geology as the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) Hauser Mountain Wilderness Area north of the BLM WSA. The WSA is underlain by rocks consisting primarily of Bonsall tonalite and Woodson Mountain granodiorite in five igneous intrusive plutons. The potash feldspar occurs in

pegmatite dikes within the plutons. The EIS quoted the U.S. Bureau of Mines report on the Hauser Mountain Roadless Area as having no potential for the occurrence of metallic or nonmetallic mineral resources.

2. Summary of Significant New Minerals Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should Be Considered in the Final Decision: No U.S. Geological Survey or U. S. Bureau of Mines mineral surveys were completed for this WSA because the area was recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

There were no unpatented mining claims or mineral sales, leases or permits recorded with the BLM in the WSA as of December, 1987.

E. Impacts on Resources

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	No Wilderness/ No Action	All Wilderness Alternative
Impact on Wilderness Values	<p>The management actions under the No Wilderness/No Action proposal would have a moderate negative impact on wilderness values in the WSA. Some of the impacts on naturalness - those from motorized and nonmotorized recreationists, range improvements, and fire suppression activities - would affect less than 5 percent of the WSA. However, impacts from greatly increased levels of livestock use would affect major portions of the WSA and be evident to many visitors to the area. Prescribed burning would severely impact up to 1,000 acres, depending on how much was burned in a given year, for about a year, but the area would then recover and perceived naturalness would benefit from increases in vegetation vigor and wildlife.</p> <p>Impacts on opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would mirror the impacts on naturalness because the opportunities depend on the naturalness of a given area.</p> <p>Special features are the scenic views and the sensitive plant, <u>Hemizonia floribunda</u>. Prescribed burns would open up some</p>	<p>Wilderness values would be retained under this alternative. Naturalness would receive minor adverse impacts on about 110 acres from visitor use along the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail and from range improvements and fire suppression activities. Opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would receive negligible adverse impacts from the same sources. There would be no net impact on the special features of the WSA, which include scenic vistas and the sensitive plant, <u>Hemizonia floribunda</u>, under this alternative.</p>

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

Issue Topic	No Wilderness/ No Action	All Wilderness Alternative
Impact on Wilderness Values (continued)	vistas and mar some, the impacts being temporary (2 to 4 years). <u>Hemizonia floribunda</u> would receive adverse impacts from livestock grazing and recreationists; these impacts would be counterbalanced by the beneficial effect of prescribed burning.	
Impact on Sensitive Plant Species	<u>Hemizonia floribunda</u> would receive minor adverse impacts from livestock grazing and recreational use; these impacts would be counterbalanced by the beneficial effect of prescribed burning.	Impacts on <u>Hemizonia floribunda</u> , both positive and negative, would be much less than under the Proposed Action, the net result being the same: no overall impact.
Impact on Livestock Grazing	Forage allocations to livestock would increase by 500 AUMs (300 percent) within 15 years. The forage utilization efficiencies of the operators would increase.	The forage utilization efficiencies of the operators would increase but forage allocations to livestock would remain at about 166 AUMs within the WSA.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Western Counties Wilderness Study Project EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Comments were mostly in agreement with the findings. Some respondents felt that grazing use should continue in the area. Others observed that rehabilitation will eliminate the visible signs of human use.
2. Draft Environmental Impact Statement: The Bureau recommended that the entire WSA be designated nonsuitable for wilderness.

Of the seventeen respondents commenting on the Hauser Mountain WSA, nine favored wilderness designation and seven opposed it. Except for the Sierra Club, which requested wilderness status for only the northern portion of the unit, all of those in favor wanted the entire WSA approved.

Three of the individuals favoring wilderness mentioned the six rare plants which are found in this region. Another stated that Hauser Mountain would be a valuable wilderness area because low-altitude ecosystems are under-represented. The area was said to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation, both of which would be particularly valuable in an area so close to major population centers. The presence of a portion of the Pacific Crest Trail within the WSA was given as another factor supporting wilderness.

The U.S. Forest Service opposed wilderness, because of a State of California Off-Highway Vehicle Grant proposal to purchase rights-of-way in this area for four-wheel drive recreation. The California Department of Forestry (CDF) expressed concern that wilderness designation would interfere with its plans and methods for providing fire protection in this remote area. Other wilderness opponents mentioned the impact this status would have on mineral exploration and development. They preferred that the area be left open for these activities.

3. Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement: The Bureau maintained its nonsuitable recommendation for this WSA. The reasons were that the area would be difficult to manage for a quality wilderness experience. The unit's dense vegetation and fire history and its increasing recreational use would probably result in periodic extensive brush fires. Suppressing fires would cause considerable surface disturbance and damage wilderness values. Other areas could provide wilderness experiences equal to or better than this unit.

Forty-one comments were received in response to the SDEIS. Thirty-five favored wilderness, while six approved the Bureau's recommendations of nonsuitable for this area. Many refuted BLM's arguments against wilderness in this general region, as given in the SDEIS. They pointed out that existing wilderness management policies permit adequate fire control and pre-suppression activities. The unit is worthy of a suitable designation, they said, because it is ideal for solitude-seeking hikers, providing excellent hiking trails and outstanding opportunities for a primitive wilderness experience; this is particularly important in this area so close to a rapidly expanding population. Further, the NWPS needed the addition of a coastal sage brush ecosystem unit. Also mentioned were the six rare plants found in this unit (only one found in the unit, the remaining five are found in the general area) and the value of wilderness status in protecting both plants and animals. Wilderness would also help to protect the natural appearance of a section of the Pacific Crest Trail which passes through the WSA. One organization stated it would be satisfied with designation as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), but several others said this would be unsatisfactory, since mining, oil and gas drilling, off-highway vehicle use, and logging are all allowed in ACECs.

Six respondents were opposed to wilderness for this unit. An off-highway vehicle group noted that this area is a good candidate for future development of OHV recreation. The San Diego Association of Governments and the Atlantic Richfield Company opposed wilderness because of its possible impact on fire suppression and control. Also mentioned by the oil company and by a gem and mineral organization was the need for access to potential mining areas. The Cleveland National Forest and a second OHV group supported the Bureau's recommendation, saying it would provide the best management for the area.